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XVIII.—*On the Ethnology of the French Exhibition, as represented by National Arts.* By MRS. LYNN LINTON.

[Read June 25th, 1867.]

MANY people decry the present French Exhibition as not only a nuisance to all concerned, but as useless in itself—as nothing but a huge and undeniably very ugly bazaar, where are merely gathered under one roof selected specimens of things to have been seen and bought on the Boulevards or in Regent-street any time these ten years. But whether this is so or not, apart from all question of commercial value or of social gain, the Exhibition has, at least, one feature of undoubted importance, namely, its ethnological material, which is singularly rich both in amount and suggestiveness. Scattered throughout the building are examples of almost every condition of human life, from the rude works of the savage, whose finest ideas of art are embodied in a necklace of shells, a mask of tattoo, or a temple of skulls, through the intermediate grades of the semi-civilised making their first awkward efforts after an intellectual life, up to the latest productions of European skill, and the grandest combinations of human power and material forces which the world has yet seen. The Exhibition of the Champ de Mars has them all ; and, either in life or in effigy, by natural productions or by individual workmanship, types of the large family of man are placed before us, claiming our pity for their degradation on the one side, or challenging our respect for their advancement on the other.

One of the most interesting parts of the Exhibition is the Archæological Gallery, which leads us by successive stages from the primitive conditions of the lake-dwellers to the complex life of modern times. Stone celts, a few bone implements, bits of battered metal, fragments of coarse pottery and of textile fabric, a little good work in gold (one gold ring, a fine six-rayed star, showing much taste and skill), the jaw of a bison, and a few seeds of grain, give us slight indications of the time when men were fighting hand to hand with nature, and conquering from her little more than the leave to live. After these we have leaf-shaped bronze swords, iron rings, glass vases, and fragments more or less complete of large earthenware vessels, with other of the ordinary remains of the Roman period. From them we pass to examples of early Christian art ; to grand mediæval missals, with their patient work and

gorgeous illuminations ; to crystal crosses enclosing mysterious relics venerated then, and now by some, as the actual presence of the Divine ; to carved ivory sacramental cups and triptychs, crucifixes and crosiers ; to pastoral staffs of fine gold encrusted with precious stones ; to exquisitely wrought fonts, and sacred vestments heavy with rich embroidery ; to fragments of lovely stone-work brought from distant cathedrals—all eloquent of the days when the ecclesiastical was the only intellectual life, and when the progress of humanity was represented by the vitality of the religious idea. Thence we pass into a more secular atmosphere, losing more and more of Christian impress as we proceed, but not yet losing conscientiousness in manner of work, nor artistic seriousness—not yet becoming frivolous or debased, and still retaining the echo of that graver piety which hitherto had been the prime motive of social life. This is the period of the most beautiful work in bronze and stone—not for churches, and not biblical in subject, but for kings and either heathen or historic ; for tapestry and majolica ; for quaint Palissy ware, with its intense realism and laborious triumph over technical difficulties ; for exquisite Limoges enamels ; for repoussé work unsurpassed before or since ; for carved ivory and elaborate devices ; for the deification of art instead of ecclesiasticism, and the greater gain of beauty thereby. After these we come to costly snuff-boxes, enamelled watches, and painted paper fans—the highest efforts of then living skill spent on paper fans for painted cheeks ; to Sèvres china of more money-worth than gold ; to high-heeled shoes, such as were worn by Madame d'Arblay's princess-shepherdesses ; to Daphne and Chloe, and Diana and Hebe, represented by court favourites generous to prodigality ; to the universal travesty of Greek art, once the religion of a whole people, but now debased to serve the graceful folly of the Renaissance and the three Louis, when La Pompadour and Du Barry displaced the Virgin and her Saints, and the Grand Monarque was the Gallic Jove, with Versailles for his Olympus and the Maintenon for his Juno. Chapters on the course of French civilisation are written in that small gallery as clearly as if pottery and bronze were open books ; and the current of historical life can be traced by the direction of art, almost without a break.

Then, how expressive of ethnological conditions are the special manufactures of various races—the intention, so to speak, of different national workmanship. At first sight it would appear that all gold and silver work would have much the same meaning ; that diamonds and emeralds could never be much more than diamonds and emeralds ; and that silks and satins, if they answered their final end of clothing the human

body, would have no other function or expression. But seen and compared together, the work of each nation has a distinctive character of its own, evidencing the peculiar habit of thought and intellectual status of the race. If we take the work of east and west, as the two extreme points of the human compass, we can easily see what an immense tract of difference lies between them in mode and object. Nothing can be lower than eastern creative art in some directions—nothing lovelier than eastern artistic manufacture, whether in carved woods, in gold and silver filigree, in inlaid work, in embroidery, or in textile fabrics. We, with all our science, cannot come near the exquisite grace of the unlearned Hindú or the wandering Kurd. Even the Genoese and Maltese gold and silver work is not equal to the Moorish or the Turkish, and indeed owes its chief beauty to the cleverness of its imitation. The east has wrought thus perfectly in its degree for centuries. While we were hacking out dislocated saints and deformed apostles in stone and ivory, the men of the east, working in that unconscious way which seems to go by instinct yet never miss perfection, were weaving their silken threads, carving their sandal-wood caskets, and leading their lines of gold into forms of absolute and unchangeable beauty—beauty not dependent on fluctuating national idea, but eternal as the grace of flowers or the glory of the sunset. And now we have gone forward, and they have stood where they were. When we were prowling about our woods and mountain fastnesses, clothed in skins touched up with woad for the better effect, the Hindûs were manufacturing muslin and printing calico, and the Chinese were inventing silk; but the Hindûs manufacture muslin now by just the same rude means as then, and they print calico as they did from time immemorial, and before Manchester and Mulhouse were; while the Chinese use those great discoveries which almost in our own time have revolutionised Europe, just as they have used them from the beginning, and to as little progressive purpose. The whole world of eastern art is as incomplete in range, if as perfect in special attainment, as it ever was; showing still the same wonderful feeling for line and colour in carved foliage, and silk embroidery, and golden threads, while representing the human form, whether as a nightmare-like god, or an oblique-eyed man, grotesque in its ugliness and childish in its inaccuracy. Meanwhile, our deformed apostles of the mediæval triptych have straightened themselves out into the “Reading Girl,” the “Socrates,” and the “Last Days of Napoleon”—the masterpieces of the Exhibition; our stone celts and clumsy cross-bows have culminated in rifled cannon and needle-guns; our wooden waggons are transformed to locomotives going sixty miles an hour; the

Great Eastern and the *Henrietta* are our latest versions of the Cantonese junk and the Malay proa ; but, with all this, we cannot yet make a Cashmere shawl nor a length of Dacca muslin—we cannot yet cut sandal-wood nor carve ivory like the Chinese, enamel copper like the Japanese, weave carpets like the Kurd, nor twist gold and silver filigree like the Moor. We can do much, but we cannot touch the supreme point of excellence in eastern ornamental work, the seeming product of instinct, tradition, and special culture.

Another point of difference between eastern and western ornamental work is the amount of finish bestowed on unseen and unimportant parts, which is simply a distinction between unconscious beauty and conscious science. Locks, hinges, and the backs and insides of things eastern, are defective or left unfinished ; gorgeous cases enclose worthless mechanism ; jewels of fabulous worth are set awry, and are neither cut nor polished ; gold and silk embroidery is thrown gracefully over dirty linen or unwashed nakedness ; but the effect of all is an amount of loveliness to which rule and square have not led us, and probably never will lead us ; though, on the other hand, our own sharp, well-ordered work, with its mathematical precision and accurate adjustment, has a beauty in itself by no means despicable although not so picturesque.

Again, the dissimilarity of intention in eastern and western work is as strongly marked as all the rest. There is no national life, no public meaning in anything that comes from the east, and no grandeur of object. We may except, in a degree, Turkey, just awakening to a sense of national needs as apart from dynastic requirements, and sending among her more personal luxuries, arms, mineral productions, cereals, and one or two models. But in general all those gay cloths, embroidered saddles, jewelled scabbards, costly pipes, and wealth of shining vests and scarves, are for the few grand men and their harems : there is nothing for the mass. Thus, it comes about that it is all small and individual work, demanding careful manipulation and costly material rather than elevated idea, and made simply to gratify the taste of the rich. If in that gratification comes the bread of the poor, so much the better ; but that would be a result by accident rather than by original intention. The west, on the contrary, sends mechanical improvements, grand scientific discoveries, and specially intricate machinery to lessen the toil of labour and to multiply its products, so that the poor shall profit as well as the rich by the results of science, and the whole platform of society be raised. The meaning of all important western work is the good of the community—not necessarily without reference to the good of the individual projector, but

having for its practical outcome the cheapening or multiplication of some of the essentials of life, the diffusion of knowledge, and the popularisation of better methods of work. Even our western ornamental work is for the most part the product of scientific arrangement, in absolute contrast to the individualised work of the east. We learn the truth of this view in a very small and quite unimportant matter, valuable only as an indication, but as such very valuable. Both west and east send models of their fruits, costume, trades, etc., but the east sends them as toys—mere playthings which may instruct while they amuse, but which are made to amuse and not instruct; while the models of the west are to aid in furtherance of science, the final cause of which is public good, not private pleasure. Is not this expressive enough of the different motives in national and industrial life?

These two conditions, then, of progress and stagnation in the method, and of private pleasure and public good as the object of labour, surely express the basic differences between the races which cannot advance beyond a certain limit of growth, and those whose progress seems destined to be arrested only by the boundaries of nature herself—between the nations which are heavily ruled by few, and the masses which do not combine, and those which, being free, are able to coalesce for the general good. Isolation and individuality, segregation and combination are not the same things, and have quite different political meanings.

It is curious to trace the gradual development of intellect, as represented by art, ornament, and manufacture. The savage makes his first essay in picture-making, by painting or tattooing himself in red and blue bands and circles; a row of shells, seeds, or teeth, strung on the midrib of a leaf, are to him what diamond studs and golden chains are to his more advanced brother; a garment of skins of beasts, of curiously woven vegetable fibres, of shells or of leaves, serves for his royal robes of Lyons velvet; and a bunch of ragged feathers prefigures the future imperial crown. After these, he tries his hand at bead-work, like the pouches and mocassins of the North American Indian; or at a little clumsy shell-work, like that sent from the Bahamas, with a certain endeavour after fidelity and beauty just perceptible. Then come more elaborate productions in basket work; then some simple but well-executed carving on pipes, clubs, spears, and paddles; and so by slow but regular gradations we arrive at the stage represented, say, by the Siamese work, standing between barbarism and that amount of artistic development which culminates in Japan and China. The Siamese work has the hideous human forms of the outer bar-

barian, but it has also the wonderful sense of beauty in colour, and the technical dexterity, of the Japanese and Chinese civilisation. It is work which reminds us, as an analogical mental condition, of the first sketch of a noble figure not yet cleared from the brute unhewn marble. Naturally, next to Siam comes the work of China and Japan; careful in method, intelligent of material, marvellous for skill of manipulation; but all small in idea and minute in execution, as would naturally be the work of over-populated countries, where life is parcelled out by inches, where the very forest trees are dwarfed to toy shrubs, where there is no room for anything large to grow, no scope for generous excess, no free space for the riot and affluence of strength. Of the two, the Japanese is the better art, and the more hopeful indication. It is more liberal than the Chinese, the forms are broader, the lines more flowing, the treatment simpler, the reproduction less stereotyped, and there is more play of individual fancy—of itself an important fact—and more freedom of idea. Cabinets and box-lids certainly afford no great opportunity for the display of heroic art; but they are fine of their kind; really grand for box-lids; and attaining about the ultimate limit of class perfection. But, good as they are, they yet show that strange mingling of knowledge and ignorance, of beauty and ugliness, of progress and stagnation, so characteristic of the nation. Broad gold work, cunningly subdued by a dark green ground and artful shading, and representing beautiful forms of birds, is placed next to squat little monsters neither human nor bestial; the most exquisitely tinted silks and satins, adorned with well-executed embroideries of birds and foliage, have also groups of scarlet-faced folks with double-acting vertebræ—if, indeed, it would not be better to say without vertebræ at all; and on the same block of ebony or ivory, carved into an intricate beauty beyond any skill of ours to produce, are faults in perspective, relative proportion, and anatomy, which with us belong only to the first beginnings of creative art. In all this have we not an epitome of the national intellect? Again, in the greater freedom of idea and larger handling of the Japanese, as contrasted with the minuteness and servile conservatism of the Chinese, have we not evidence of the more active vitality of the one nation, and of the more stolid mummification of the other? We may rely upon it, that the genius of a nation makes itself felt in every branch of production, and that even carving in wood is in its degree as true an exponent of mind and character as is literature or social polity.

Within the larger area of ethnological differences in art lies the smaller one of international differences, seen very clearly in

the various European courts, and the direction which the genius of productive art has taken in each. Take the jewels as one small but popular example. There are lovely Italian ornaments of the purest taste, broad and simple though so highly wrought; and there are Palais Royal prettinesses of diamond birds, and golden boas, and green leaves with lady-birds settled on the edge, and drifting flower petals bearing dewdrops in the curve, and childish toys as pins, and charms, and brooches, and buttons; and, to crown all, automatic singing birds, executing a duet of song most creditably for metal windpipes. Then we have the English jewelry, culminating in Lady Dudley's jewels, incomparably the finest in the Exhibition, but owing nothing to their treatment. They are set quite quietly, announcing themselves, and dependent only on intrinsic value. A Frenchman would have isolated the finest, and have massed the smaller into an overwhelming conglomerate of brilliancy. The Englishman simply sets them so as to show themselves in order. Is there no international difference here? Then look at the Austrian and Prussian art manufacture—not art creation, which is another thing. Military in model, precise, square, clean cut—how different it is to the irregular grace, say, of Venetian glass, of Genoese filigree, or of Russian gold-work. It is the art manufacture of highly drilled nations without much generosity of fancy. The Russian work is also intensely characteristic—partly quaint and homely, partly religious and ideal. Golden preserve-pots with silver tops wrought into the likeness of paper covers, and bands of golden bast to keep all snug, samovars, pickle jars, shoes, damask table-napkins on plates of gold, and many other specimens of dull domestic thought, stand by great mosaics representing saintly subjects and wrought with marvellous skill and patience—by wonderful repoussé work—by beautiful cabinets of ebony, enriched with raised flowers in costly stones, and eloquent of Italian influence—by bronzes of the highest style of art—by glass and china of exquisite beauty. Is not this a fair sample of the Russian mind?—homely, devout, a little clumsy, perhaps, but with that compensative longing for Italian art so noticeable, too, in Germany, to act as a counterfoil to its own heaviness? Yet it is from those countries which have these compensative longings that we must look for action, change, and progress. Again, is not that small, simple work executed in common material, which is sent by Switzerland and North Germany, evidently the product of a bad climate, and long winter evenings, and nature in her most austere mood, and lives isolated from the larger world without, and even from the smaller circles within their country? It is individual work; merely imitative

and in no way ideal in a high sense; though expressing the quaint and kindly fancies of a simple and domestic people, and though, in its clock-work, aiming at and attaining a large amount of commercial usefulness: yet, as a rule, it is work done with great patience and by long laborious pains, such as could not possibly come out of the rank forests of the tropics where continuous exertion is an almost superhuman effort, nor out of the sunny plains of Italy, and breathing yet the spirit of Raffaele, of Cellini, and of Buonarotti. It could only be what it is, unimaginative work that fills up the dark dull hours of home life, without much more mental effort than that needed for patch-work or knitting—an occupation not a creation, dexterous handling rather than artistic method. Every nation thus distinctly expresses itself; but the catalogue would be uninteresting if proceeded with, and enough has been said to show the differences to be discerned by those who care to look for them.

The curious in ethnology may see specimens of every race of man, and of very many tribal subdivisions, in this great international concourse. There is the effigy of a negro from Upper Egypt, escorting ivory, clothed in skins, and adorned with savage finery: a man and a brother by no means pleasant to encounter in lonely places. A live Nubian, in his dark dress, sits smiling patiently by a group of familiar figures, of which he is sometimes taken to be one. The figures are those of a rich fellah with finer features and a more cultivated countenance than has this living poorer brother bound to labour and not to earn; a Nubian woman, pretty in spite of her high cheek-bones, small head, thick lips, and long lean throat; a negress distinctly ugly, but not so ugly as her African sister undiluted; an Abyssinian with a straight face; an Arab merchant with a true Semitic face, the eyes well opened, the nostrils keen and thin, the lips fine and flexible, copper-coloured, but else quite beautiful. And if you stand by that group long enough, stolid Turks and brighter Persians; Algerines with Jewish features; Parsees, small, sleepy, and yet sharp with a feline kind of sharpness; Chinamen, clumsy, flat-faced, heavy, gross; Japanese, more feminine in appearance, and more graceful in movement; Riffs and Moors; Hindus and Negroes; picturesque Albanians like men in an opera or at a fancy ball; Armenians in their long black cloaks, with bushy beards and that nameless air of cultivated intelligence in both look and manner; Arabs from the plains and cities; Roman women with their lustrous eyes and level brows; Venetians golden-haired and of more gentle bearing; Neapolitans in their pretty national dress, and with the sun

upon their bronzed cheeks—all these and more will probably pass by; some staring stolidly as if they did not see what they looked at, and others glancing keenly, critically observing all, but very resolute not to adopt habits to which they are unaccustomed, nor discoveries which would revolutionize them outright.

Passing from the East and South, we get to representatives of the fair-haired north: to the good heavy Bavarian, looking bemused with beer; to the Norwegian girl, frank and innocent, like Faust's unlucky Margaret; and to groups of comely Dalmatian peasants, with their fresh faces and honest ways, making their small efforts after artistic compensation, by the bright colours and elaborate ornamentation of their picturesque dresses. There are effigies of quiet-looking Lapland women too, in summer costume, curiously like some of the Easterns we have just seen, but of a less fleshy kind, the forms smaller and sharper, and the colour lighter—yet the type something the same; and there is a model of a Lapland man in his sledge, done up in furs, and out on his toilsome conflict with winter and starvation. Russia sends a case full of her various peoples, ranging from the North to the South, and from the East to the West—a wide collection enough, showing men of absolutely different types and races, and of distinctly marked ethnological varieties. Tartar faces, Chinese faces, Jewish, Turkish, broad Saxon and sharper Slave, the handsome Georgian and the mean-looking Finn, express some of the varieties of that great amorphous nation, and make us understand a few of the difficulties which must lie in the government, and wonder at the successful annealing, of such heterogeneous materials.

Out of doors, the annexes, architecture, and restaurants offer the same immense national varieties. The forward races fill their allotted spaces with scientific material and the latest mechanical contrivances; while Egypt builds up a model of the Temple of Edfou, with its sphinxes, lotus capitals, and the Eternal Neph upon the architrave. But as repetition invariably vulgarises, the subtle grace of line and harmony of colour of the original is lost in the copy, which, however, does not prevent our feeling the wonderful union of past and present, when we find a modern model of Lesseps' canal and the whole Egyptian country inside the doors which Neph overshadows and the sphinx protects. China sends a small tea-house, where you may have real Chinese tea, apparently only leaves and sugar, handed to you by a flat-faced, mild-mannered maiden, with golden water-

lilies beneath her brocaded dress. Perhaps the curious might find birds'-nest soup, edible dog, sea-slugs or tripang, live crabs, ginseng, and other special celestial food, if they were to try. It would be an experiment worth making, chop-sticks superadded. The grave impassive Turk, sitting in cross-legged dignity within his cool, dark, laticed shop, has real Turkish coffee and real Turkish tobacco, in exchange for the infidels' francs. American negros hand you marvellous compounds of uncouth denomination; and if the one forgets your order, the other will tell you confidentially that 'Jim is only poor trash! he goes off his head, and gets mixed up considerable some!' Russia has perfumed tea, with slices of lemon in the place of milk, caviare which demands an education before you come to due appreciation, and dried fish, served by a handsome youth in a red silk blouse, and by a beautiful woman in her graceful national costume; a fair modest Austrian, also in national costume, gives you Lager-bier; a heavy but gentle-looking Dutch girl hands you a glass of *Advocatus Borrel*, if you have the wit to ask for it. In the Australian department, showily-dressed and very beautiful English girls of wretchedly bad style, humiliating enough to the national character if taken as average specimens of Englishwomen, flirt outrageously with the gentlemen always thronging the department, while pouring out the brandied sherry or the Burton beer dear to the souls of Englishmen; and everywhere, as a mark, perhaps, of Anglo-Saxon ubiquitousness, you can get pale ale, to which the men of all races seem to take as kindly and liberally as if Bass and Allsopp were the expressions of a universal instinct.

There is one little fact in the English food department which must not be omitted, though apparently insignificant. Owen Jones, our best illuminator and ornamental artist, has given his skill for the better display of Huntley and Palmer's biscuits; and Crosse and Blackwell have used a beautiful Wedgwood vase for their preserved ginger. The meaning of which is surely the endeavour, now making itself felt through all English life, to get a true and noble manner of art into our daily surroundings, and the desire to unite the idealising presence of beauty with the practical advantages of utilitarian science, hitherto at war together.

I dare not go further afield among the different architectural models in the garden. It is enough to say, that almost every country sends something, expressive of the general style and mode of housing its people. Swiss *châlets*; an English cottage, of bastard Elizabethan style; a Russian *izba*, with its strange mixture of art and barbarism, its half

Swiss, half oriental cut woodwork and paint; a Moorish house, white and glaring without, but full of the most lovely arabesque work, and enriched with colour and gilding; a Norwegian cottage; a French model farm, and an imperial pavilion all Sèvres china, Gobelins tapestry, and gilding, as the two extremes of utility and luxury; a model of the simple, rude-looking hut, rather than house, of Gustavus Vasa; a stable for Mehari dromedaries, in the Egyptian garden; an American hospital tent, and, I believe, the model of an American log-house—but this I did not see with my own eyes—these, I think, may be taken as the most striking but by no means all the architectural models. The garden is vast, the buildings very numerous, and as yet much remains unfinished; but enough was completed at the end of May to show the meaning and character of the whole. In fact, the Exhibition is a rich museum, wherein the student may find lessons in almost all arts and all sciences—ethnology among them; or it is only a gallanty-show and a series of shops in the form of a bazaar to those attracted merely by its glitter and display. Here, as everywhere else, the mind sees what it brings; and those who wish to be instructed can be thoroughly well taught; and those who wish only to be amused may lounge away long summer days in idle pleasure and innocent diversion.
